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Wm. B. Brigham, Etnataek:  
The Arrowsmith Battlefield

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

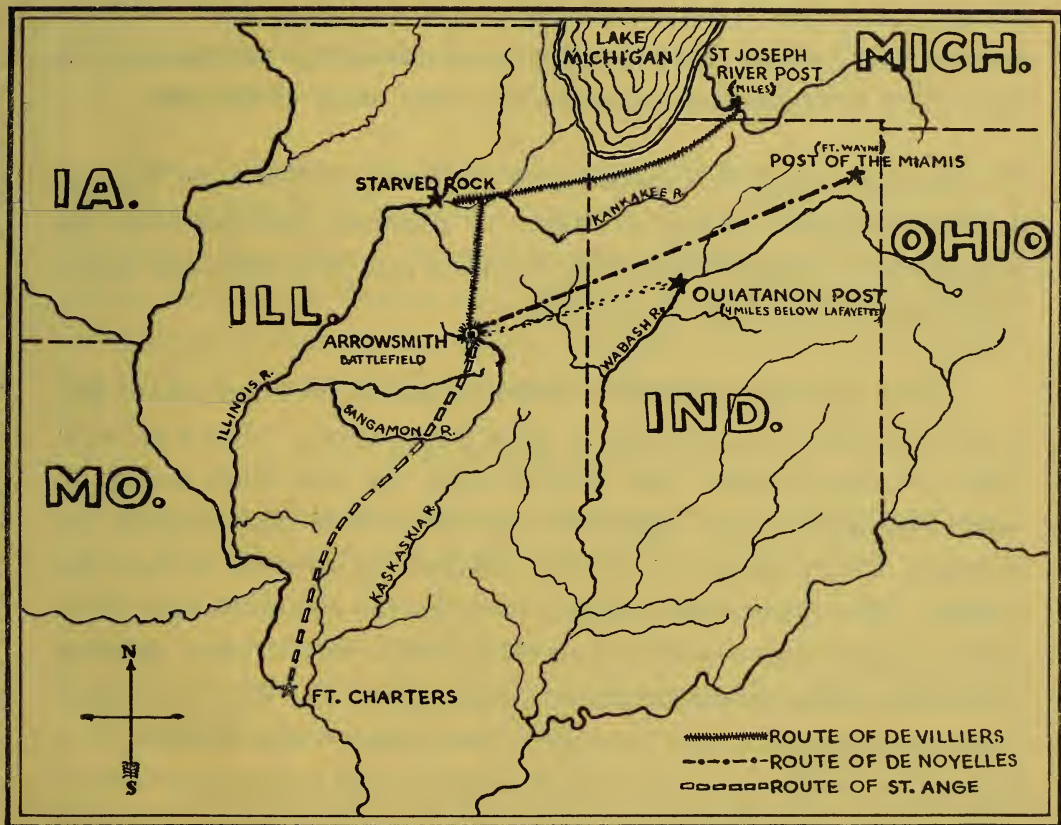




# ETNATAEK

## The Arrowsmith Battlefield

A half mile south, two miles east, a quarter south and a quarter east of Arrowsmith, Illinois



Superimposed on a modern map are the routes taken by French commanders as they closed in on the Fox Tribe.



# **The Story of Etnataek\***

by William B. Brigham

When Jacob Smith came to this place in 1844, he noticed many circular depressions in the grove on the hill. To the northeast about forty rods were what appeared to be a series of rifle pits, and similar pits were seen to the south and southeast of the hill. At times when wood from this hill was being burned in an open grate, melted lead was seen trickling from it.

Mr. Smith's son, Joseph, and his grandson Roy, who is now living on the farm, have found many trader's axes, gun parts, pot hooks and large patina-coated bullets. They also have made interesting observations and have aided historians and archaeologists in the study of this site.

Soon after their first contact with the French in Wisconsin, the Fox Indians developed a feeling of distrust or suspicion that later broke out in hostilities. French traders were murdered and their goods and canoes were taken by members of this tribe.

French authorities decided to destroy or punish the Foxes, and to that end they secured the assistance of other Indian tribes. After a skirmish with the Illinois Indians near Starved Rock, the Fox chiefs decided to move their women and children to the east among their friends, the Iroquois. This would leave the three hundred warriors free to fight the French. The entire tribe travelled south to the Illinois-Wabash Trail, which crossed what is now McLean County from west to east. Arriving at the little grove on the Sangamon (Smith farm), they dug in for a rest and sent messengers with presents to the tribes on the Wabash. The Foxes were seeking assurance that it would be safe to proceed eastward. Other Indians that had been watching them sent runners to all French trading posts, and soon the Foxes found themselves surrounded.

\*Algonquin: where the fight, battle or clubbing took place.

The battle began on August 17, 1730 and lasted twenty-three days. Both sides suffered greatly for lack of food. The besieged Foxes attempted to escape during a storm in the night of September 8th. Many were captured or killed the next day. The French were pleased with the results of the battle and the officers made complete reports.

Captain de Villiers sent his son, Coulon\*, and Pierre Reaume, a Fox interpreter who had been in the West many years, to carry the message to Hocquart at Quebec. Hocquart states that he questioned the son on all the facts of the report and got some details that had been omitted.

He also gathered the expressions of Reaume which were according to Canadian usage. Chaussegros de Lery, chief engineer in building the walls of Quebec, was called in. From the report, he drew up a plan of the battle with notes on the same.

Being in the open country with no nearby landmarks, the site of this battle was difficult to locate on a map, and some writers have placed it elsewhere. But when all the records were carefully considered and the various finds of this location were analyzed, we have conclusive evidence that it was here that the Fox Indians were defeated and the once mysterious Arrowsmith battlefield is the real Etnataek.

## THE OLD TRAIL

Over the high ground south of the marker ran the Illinois-Wabash Trail. Here in early days travelled migrating Indians tribes and war parties, going and returning from their raids. A state road closely following this trail from Fort Clark (Peoria) to Danville was opened in 1831. Emigrant wagons were then streaming westward along this route, and mail by courier was delivered weekly.

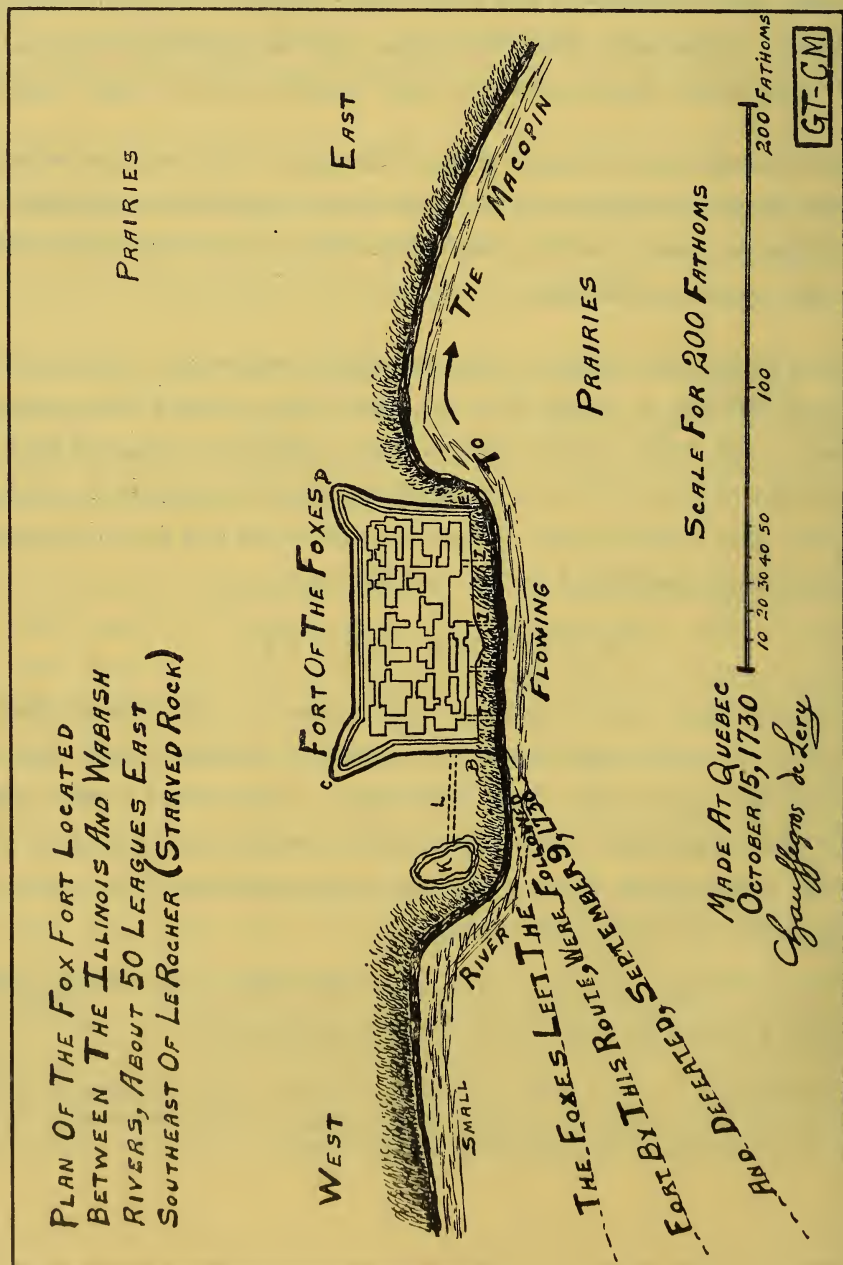
Note: For a more complete account of this battle, see "Transactions No. 4 of the McLean County Historical Society".

\*It is interesting to note that Coulon de Villiers was in command of the French army that defeated George Washington at Fort Necessity in the French and Indian wars twenty-four years later.

(Traces of the Battle are no longer visible.)


The French map below shows the fort in the hill and the stream (Sangamon River).

Another map by deLery made at the same time, shows St. Ange with one hundred French soldiers and Illinois Indians at the rifle pits southeast on the prairie. The other French commanders were located to the north-east including deVilliers with Kickapoos, Mascoutins, and Pottawatomies from Starved Rock and de Noyelle with French and Miami Indians. A small group of Ouyatanon Indians were camped at pits south of the marker.



De Lery's Map (Translated)





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